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Earl 'Buz' Hunt, 1933-2016

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Earl 'Buz' Hunt, 1933-2016

May we all live so well, accomplish so much, laugh so often.

The intelligence/cognitive ability research area has lost one of its leaders, both in quality and breadth of research contributions and actions to further the efforts of others in this area. Earl 'Buz' Hunt passed away April 12, 2016, at age 83, peacefully at home in his bed, his family and many friends gathered together. Buz was not a physically large man, a fact he bemoaned with some frequency as he believed his size had impeded his football career. He was not particularly socially aggressive or dominant and didn't seek center stage. Nor did he focus on one specific and popular area of study. His general interests prominently included that perennially politically controversial topic of IQ, but he wanted to understand what it is and how we use it in our lives. He especially wondered whether we might be able to figure out how to use it better, and was not interested in establishing that one group of people was born to have more of it than some other group.

In other words, he didn't insist on always having the limelight, even if only for criticism, and sometimes the limelight missed him. But he was a giant nonetheless. He was the guy three or four rows back from the front at conference talks who raised his hand with most pointedly relevant questions – inevitably addressed with some element of dry, wry wit that lessened the sting of even his most devastating critiques. He also might be the guy who did the most to introduce and substantiate the idea that to understand either individual differences in measures of broad cognitive performance (such as IQ scores, educational achievements, and job competence) or the specific cognitive components involved in carrying out any particular cognitive task, individual differences and cognitive psychologists were going to have to communicate. His early 'What does it mean to be high verbal?' (Hunt, Lunneborg, & Lewis, 1975) and 'Mechanics of verbal ability' (1978) were fine examples of this work. They presaged later conceptual and empirical developments in working memory research and wrestling constructively and openly with the problems that all cognitive task performances involve individual-specific blends of going-in familiarity and need to puzzle out afresh and can be carried out using strategies that differ in efficiency and

effectiveness. These are problems that have still not been resolved today, yet often get swept under the rug.

And he was certainly one of the guys who mined most constructively and fruitfully the idea that human cognition and behavior can be modelled mathematically and computer-simulated. He used such models to illuminate the roles of attentional direction and focus, aptitude and experience, short- and long-term memory, strategy selection, language processing, perceptual speed, and visual and spatial orientation in cognitive performances ranging from inductive reasoning tasks to classroom teaching techniques. Perhaps the finest example of this was his 'Unified model of attention and problem-solving' (Hunt & Lansman, 1986), which demonstrated how the proposed model was consistent not just with empirical results from one cognitive task but across a rather broad range of different highly-specific tasks. His contributions ranged from ideas of 'national' and 'cultural' intelligence (e.g., Hunt & Wittman, 2008) and consciousness (1996) to the minutiae of verbal-visual matching (MacLeod, Hunt, & Mathews, 1978), attentional capture (Yee & Hunt, 1991), and recall of arbitrary information (Hunt, Davidson, & Lansman, 1981), and even veered off into assessing the behavior of sports coaches (Smith, Smoll, & Hunt, 1977).

His life matched his professional interests in breadth of experience. He met his lifelong wife Mary Lou at Stanford, and enjoyed joking that some might consider their early relationship to have been illicit because she was a grad student preying on a (most enthusiastically willing) undergrad at the time. Upon graduation, he spent three years as an ROTC officer in the United States Marine Corps just following the Korean War, working as a military lawyer, artillery officer, and surveyor, mostly in Hawaii. After he was discharged, the now-married couple moved across the country so he could pursue a PhD in Psychology and Computer Science at Yale, and they began to accumulate the family that incorporated a son, a daughter, and two more sons over the next ten years. They moved back to California after he completed his PhD in 1960, where he held a management science research post at UCLA for two years. Apparently, he and Mary Lou hadn't had enough of long-distance moving yet, as they spent the next 2-3 years at the University of Sydney in Australia, where Buz lectured in both Psychology and Physics, a combination that many psychologists would not welcome. This time in Australia made a profound impression on Buz and he often spoke about it; he remained very interested in the social progress and culture of its aboriginals. When they returned, Buz accepted an associate professorship at UCLA for one year, and then moved

literally one final time; in 1966 Buz accepted a professorship in Psychology and Computer Science at the University of Washington, basically the position he held for the rest of his life. The couple resided in one house overlooking beautiful Lake Washington outside of Seattle throughout.

That residential stability provided the base for an interesting and varied life. Buz knew the geology and geography of Washington state as if he'd surveyed the place himself because he'd hiked, camped, skied, run, or beachcombed almost all of it. He and Mary Lou and their offspring toured the world from Europe to Asia, Africa, and South America. Buz was fascinated by military history and strategies, and the military's need to identify recruits with appropriate aptitudes to perform the cognitive tasks involved in specific military activities on which many other lives often depended. The latter was one of his most common sources of outside consulting engagements. This work brought him to military facilities not often visited by civilians, and introduced him to critical situations outside the common experiences of civilian life. He was as completely at home on a mushroom foray, digging for geoduck in the Puget Sound sand, exploring the ruins of Machu Picchu, and navigating a new city as he was in his living room sharing wine and 'nibbles' with family and friends. He was a lively conversationalist on everything from current politics to atomic physics to philosophy to Husky football, full of pertinent observations, relevant personal anecdotes, and ready interjections of that wry, dry, humor, but he listened well too. He was a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather, a warm and generous companion and host to basically everyone else he came across, and a great friend to many. Nevertheless, he didn't hesitate to voice disagreement to any of them when it mattered, sometimes in manners that seemed sharp to them, though he never intended his disagreement at all personally. He believed strongly in academic freedom of expression and direction of study, but equally strongly in the need for research rigor and ethical behavior. He was one of the most intellectually honest people I've known, both in his insistence on seeking the truth and nothing but and in his willingness to acknowledge when he might have missed it.

Buz considered the International Society for Intelligence Research (ISIR) and the journal *Intelligence* to be most important additions to the professional outlets for psychologists to exchange ideas and research findings. He was an original member of the journal Editorial Board and of the ISIR Executive Board. He worked tirelessly to bring in more members, particularly younger ones and more regular

conference attendees, and to expand the breadth of topics featured at the conference. He and I drafted the Society's Constitution when the Executive Board was opened for election, and he was the first President elected by the Society in 2011. He received its Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009 and was the conference Distinguished Interviewee in 2005. He was similarly honored by the Association for Psychological Science in 2011, with the James McKeen Cattell Award for outstanding contributions to applied psychology. He was a frequent contributor to this journal and tireless and constructively critical reviewer of many of its other submitters.

Buz was a perennial book author, and his offerings spanned the range of his research interests. This began early in his career, with work on computer-simulated models of inductive reasoning covered in three books: Hunt (1962) *Concept Learning: An Information Processing Problem* (Wiley). Hunt, Marin, and Stone (1966), *Experiments in Induction* (Academic Press), and Hunt (1975), *Artificial Intelligence* (Academic Press). He covered the cognitive aspects of work performance in *Will We Be Smart Enough? A Cognitive Analysis of the Coming Workforce* (1995; New York: Russell Sage Foundation) and his ideas on consciousness in *Thoughts on Thought* (2002; L. Erlbaum Associates). He outlined how to operationalize behavior mathematically in *The Mathematics of Behavior* (2007; Cambridge University Press). His textbook on the whole subject of intelligence (*Human Intelligence*; 2011; Cambridge University Press) is considered by many to be the finest on the topic (though possibly not for undergraduates). Buz died working actively and enthusiastically on another book, under contract for it with me. I am proud to have contributed to making the last couple years of life feel meaningful and intellectually rich, and can only hope that he will have been proud of the use I make of the substantial ideas and material he contributed and the way I end up handling the rest when I've finally completed it, with him as full co-author.

The field and ISIR will miss Buz. We need to develop more like him, who think hard and rigorously about the tough issues in understanding human intelligence. I and many others will also greatly miss him personally.

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